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PROCEEDINGS, &c.

OF THE

Society for Constitutional Information.

March 27, 1794.

To the SECRETARY of the SOCIETY for CONSTITUTIONAL
INFORMATION.

CITIZEN,

I AM directed by the London Corresponding Society to transmit the following Resolutions to the Society for Constitutional Information, and to request the sentiments of that Society, respecting the important measures which the present juncture of affairs seems to require.

The London Corresponding Society conceives that the moment is arrived when a full and explicit declaration is necessary from all the friends of freedom. Whether the late illegal and unheard of prosecutions and sentences shall determine us to abandon our cause, or shall excite us to pursue a radical reform with an ardour proportioned to the magnitude of the object, and with a zeal as distinguished on our parts as the treachery of others in the same glorious cause is notorious. The Society for Constitutional Information is, therefore, required to determine whether or not they will be ready when called upon to act in conjunction with this and other Societies to obtain a fair Representation of the PEOPLE? Whether they concur with us in seeing the necessity of a speedy Convention, for the purpose of obtaining in a constitutional and legal method a redress of those grievances, under which we at present labour, and which can only be effectually removed by a full and fair Representation of the PEOPLE of Great Britain. The London Corresponding Society mind their friends, that the present crisis demands prudence, unanimity and vigour that ever was or can be exerted by

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MEN and Britons; nor do they doubt but that manly firmness and consistency, will finally, and they believe **SHORTLY** terminate in the full accomplishment of all their wishes.

I am, fellow Citizen,

(in my humble measure),

A Friend to the Rights of Man,

T. HARDY, Secretary.

Resolved unanimously,

I. That dear as **JUSTICE** and **LIBERTY** are to Britons, yet the value of them is comparatively small, without a dependance on their permanency; and there can be no security for the continuance of *any right* but in **EQUAL LAWS**.

II. That **Equal Laws** can never be expected but by a full and fair Representation of the People. To obtain which, in the way pointed out by the Constitution *has been* and *is* the sole object of this Society. For this we are ready to hazard every thing, and never, but with our lives will we relinquish an object which involves the *happiness* or even the political existence of ourselves and posterity.

III. That it is the decided opinion of this Society, that to secure ourselves from future illegal and scandalous prosecutions, to prevent a repetition of wicked and unjust sentences, and to recall those wise and wholesome laws that have been wrested from us, and of which scarcely a vestige remains, there ought to be *immediately* a **CONVENTION** of the **PEOPLE**, by Delegates deputed for that purpose from the different Societies of the *Friends of Freedom* assembled in the various parts of this nation. And we pledge ourselves to the Public, to pursue every legal method speedily to accomplish so desirable a purpose.

It was resolved by the **SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION**, That their Secretary should assure the **LONDON CORRESPONDING SOCIETY** that they heartily approved of their intentions, and would co-operate with them in obtaining an object of so much importance to the peace and happiness of Society. And that *he* also request the London Corresponding Society to send a Delegation of its Members, to confer upon the subject with an equal number of the Society for Constitutional Information.

A Meeting of the Delegates from the two Societies being held, they came to the following Resolutions:

I.  it appears to this Committee very desirable, that a Convention or General Meeting of the Friends of Liberty

should be called, for the purpose of taking into consideration the proper methods of obtaining a full and fair representation of the People.

II. That it be recommended to the Society for Constitutional Information, and London Corresponding Society to institute a regular and pressing correspondence with all those parts of the country, where such measures may be likely to be promoted; not only to instigate the Societies already formed, but to endeavour also to produce such other Associations as may farther the General Object.

III. That it appears to this Committee, that the General Object would be promoted, if a standing Committee of Co-operation between the two Societies were established for the purpose of holding personal communication with such members of similar Societies in other parts of the country as may occasionally be in London, and who may be authorized by their respective Societies to act with such Committee.

The above resolutions being reported to the SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION. It was by them resolved, that the same should be entered on their Books as part of the proceedings of the Society; and the Committee of Correspondence was appointed to co-operate with the Committee of the London Corresponding Society in conformity with the third Resolution.

SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION.

LONDON, *March 28, 1794.*

Resolved that the following Address be sent to Messrs.

MUIR, PALMER, SKIRVING, MARGAROT
and GERALD.

FRIENDS and FELLOW CITIZENS,

ALTHOUGH we have hitherto been the silent, yet we have by no means been the unconcerned Spectators of your Conduct and Sufferings. We have seen and approved of your exertions for your Country's Happiness—We have marked with Honest Indignation, every step that your Enemies have taken to bring you to your present situation. Your Enemies are the Enemies of PUBLIC LIBERTY, the Men who are conspiring against the Happiness of Mankind. The Cause in which you embarked, and to which you have borne an honourable testimony, is worthy of every exertion, and its importance to the World too great, to expect its accomplishment without Opposition.

The History of Liberty, for whose sake you are doomed to a long and unmerited Exile, will afford in the present instance, that Consolation, that former Martyrs to the same Cause have experienced: the consolation, that you *will not*, you *cannot*, Suffer in vain.

Men may perish, but Truth will prevail; neither Persecution, nor Banishment, nor Death itself, can *finally* injure the progress of those Principles which involve the General Happiness of Man.

While therefore we join every Friend to Humanity in lamenting what you have *already* endured, and with anxious hearts, anticipate the Perils to which you *may* be exposed in a barren and uncultivated Country; we can rejoice that the sources of Happiness are limited to no place, but are as extensive as the dominion of God; under the Protection of that GREAT BEING, may you at all Times, and in all Places, feel the pleasure that arises from conscious Integrity.

Fellow Citizens, we assure you that the memory of your virtues shall never be effaced from our Breasts; the Cause for which you have struggled, is a Glorious Cause, the World that has witnessed *your exertions*, shall witness *ours also*.

A full and fair Representation of the People of Great Britain, we seek with all the ardour of Men and Britons, for the sake of which we are not only ready to *act with Vigour and Unanimity*, but *we trust, prepared also to Suffer with Constancy*.

Our best wishes will ever attend you, and we do believe that the Day is not very distant, when we shall again receive you on the British shores, the welcome Children of a FREE and HAPPY COUNTRY.

TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION.

SURPRISE TRANSPORT, April 16, 1794.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE received the Address of the Society for Constitutional Information. Be pleased to represent to the Society that I am now just recovering from a dangerous illness, in which I was given over by the two medical men in the ship. It was contracted from the *unwholesomeness* of my prison, and the severity of my confinement. I must trust, therefore, to the candour of the Society, to excuse the inability of the Answer of a half-murdered Man.

FELLOW CITIZENS,

I HAVE long since looked upon your Society with admiration and esteem, considering it as the source and school of most

of the political information, which by the blessing of God has overspread the Island. I have been instructed by the wisdom of your papers, and animated by the spirit of your addresses. That my conduct is approved by such a Society is my pride and my joy.

You say, (and the consideration is the support of my life) *that the history of liberty will prove by the experience of her former martyrs, that sufferings in her cause cannot be in vain.* That my sufferings may not be in vain, I ardently wish that the eyes of my countrymen may be opened, not only to the illegality and despotism of my sentence, but to the alarming measures by which it was brought about. *My jury was three times packed by the servants of the crown before it set upon me.* In the first instance by the Sheriff's depute, placemen immediately appointed by the Crown, in the second by the Crown Agent, Lord Advocate, &c. at Edinburgh, and in the third by the Justiciary Lords, who tried the cause. These last, arbitrarily appoint the fifteen particular persons who are to sit upon the accused. The strongest objections are mere air, as the Lords alone are the judges of the validity of them. A majority of the fifteen condemns. If therefore ministry, with their all-extensive influence, can in three counties find only eight servile tools subservient to their views, the fortune, the liberties, the lives of all Scotland are at their mercy. Trial is condemnation. The sentence is appointed before hand by the Minister, and mine was known a full week at Edinburgh before it was uttered. They can ruin, or even murder whom they please. This infamous robbery of the first right of Englishmen, a trial by jury fairly chosen, I have endeavoured to set forth in a letter to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle, last October or Nov. of the date (if I remember rightly) of the 22d or 27th, of which I now avow myself the Author, to which I beg leave to draw the attention of the Society for Constitutional Information.

Farewell Fellow Citizens,

I am with respect and esteem,

Your equal Brother,

THOMAS FYSHE PALMER.

SURPRISE TRANSPORT, SPITHEAD, April 17, 1794.

MR. PRESIDENT,

PERMIT me Sir, to assure you, and the respectable Constitutional Society, that the very consoling address, received agreeably to their Resolution of the 28th ult. has excited in me, as also in the hearts of each of my fellow Martyrs, for the important cause of universal suffrage, and annual Parliaments, the most lively sensations of gratitude and esteem. The Constitutional Society was the foremost of true Patriots, to raise the Standard

of Reform, for the purpose of redeeming from the contaminating and contagious influence of corruption, those venerable, but almost lost principles of the British Constitution. Wrought into it by the blood, and irresistible energies of our fore-fathers, many of whom, rather than that these principles, upon which depend the virtue and felicity of Society, should be lost sight of, exhibited their high esteem of them on Scaffolds and in Dungeons; that all, even the most callous Spectators might be persuaded, that the truths for which they did not reckon even their lives too dear a sacrifice, were surely worthy of the unprejudiced investigation of all. Your remark therefore is just, and it is very soothing to us, "*We do not, we cannot suffer for such a Cause in Vain.*" The resentment of our enemies, driving them into such absurd measures towards men, against whom vice of any kind is not even alledged, must have moved in every unprejudiced mind the restless question; Why? Why are men who seek the improvement of their species thrown with Felons into Dungeons? And full information must follow sincere enquiry, and at length convert all to the side of truth and righteousness. I therefore cheerfully consent to suffer *to promote the general good.*

We are blamed as having prematurely, at least, exposed ourselves to the necessity of sealing by our sufferings, the cause we would promote. If in this case we have erred, I will readily take the whole blame, as having strained every nerve to press forward the measure of a general Convention, as being the only means to avert impending ruin. I sought to arouse and alarm my countrymen to consider their extreme danger. I feared that the necessity for such association would be on us before we were prepared for it. Besides what measure could possibly interest so much the public enquiry? what has so much increased public information? It excited counter associations, and caused every man to see who were on the side of truth, and who were on the side of corruption: It exposed the selfish and interested designs of the one, and the unfeigned prosecution of the public good by the other. I speak so with the greater confidence before a Society that must have marked the progress of *information* so long under their own auspices. You must know that this progress, the exciting the enquiry of the public, has been more extensively effected during the last year, than during the ten preceding ones. The cause was the General Convention. The terror and hatred of Ministry to it proves the truth. Who then would have refused even his life to have been instrumental in promoting so much good?

Your explicit approbation of our conduct has prompted this self-exultation, forgive therefore my freedom. I may be mis-

taken. The important Revolution in human affairs, to which every christian looks with anxious hope, may be yet distant. If it is, Tyranny may still triumph. But God forbid it. It would then be better to die than to live. But though I hope the reverse, I know as you justly observe, "*That the importance of the Cause of Freedom is too great to the world, to expect its accomplishment without opposition,*" and the opposition of despairing Tyranny will be dreadful, it will be destructive, and why,—because nothing but its ruining last struggle will rouse mankind from their idle dream of security. *They regard not, they pity not its present victims.* They put off the evil far from themselves, and hence it overtakes them suddenly, "when their strength is gone and there is none shut up or left." Hold fast therefore what you have attained. Your association alone can prevent the dreadful consequence of such indifference. UNITING LOVE is the strength, as well as solace of mankind. Cement by reciprocal kind communications, the union of hearts, of interests, of measures, WHICH HAVE BEEN SOLEMNLY RESOLVED. By so doing, you will escape the destruction which is coming on all the earth.

Worthy Citizens, I will solace my mind, when drooping, with the kind assurance which you have vouchsafed by your masterly address, that I, with my brethren, have a place in your affection and prayers; and I will believe with you, "*that the day is not very distant, when you will again receive us on British Shores, the welcome children of a free and happy people.*" When indeed it shall be demonstrated, "*that our Enemies were the Enemies of public liberty. The men who conspired against the happiness of mankind.*" But though the mighty are combined, though they should so far prevail as to scatter utterly in their vain apprehension the friends of truth, the principles of it which are already established, is the "stone cut out without hands, and shall become a great mountain and fill the whole earth," for he who first commanded the light to shine out of darkness is its almighty patron.

Be assured my dear brethren, that I have already realized the pleasures of conscious integrity, and can reflect with the sincerest satisfaction, that I was influenced in all my exertions for the cause of Reform, by that benevolence which I would ever cultivate as the principle of every kind of human excellence.

With sentiments of the most unfeigned esteem and respect,

I am,

Your sincere well wisher,

W. SKIRVING.

The President of the London Constitutional Society.

SURPRISE TRANSPORT, *April 24, 1794.*
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION IN LONDON.

THAT the spirit of Freedom is not extinguished, but still retains its former Energy, in defiance of the Artifices and of the violence of Despotism, is an object of high consolation to my mind. Engaged in the sacred cause of man, individual man is an atom of little value, and in speaking of himself, when he recollects and contemplates the principles of his conduct, should disdain to make use of the term Suffering. Without a vain affectation, for myself, I disclaim the assumption of extraordinary merit. The man who has acted in obedience to the law of his own conscience, has simply discharged his duty, and the contrary supposition would involve him in guilt. I am deeply persuaded, that many of the men, whom I now address, in a situation less circumscribed, with abilities more powerful, but not with hearts more honest, after having achieved what I could not accomplish, would with the same silent scorn have regarded each feeble attempt to shackle and to repress the free born mind.

Your preceding exertions, in attempting to procure a fair representation of the People in Parliament have been meritorious. They are a solemn and sure pledge of their future continuation. In proportion to the number, and to the rapidity of those tremendous scenes, which daily in succession pass before the eye; *All, All* of them deriving their existence from this violation of our Constitutional Rights, let your ardour in procuring a rectification of what is wrong be increased. Confident you will obtain the blessing of that *Being*, whose great design is the happiness of his creation,

THOMAS MUIR.

It being recommended at a former Meeting, to the Members of the SOCIETY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION, to peruse two printed Sermons of the Rev. J. H. Williams, preached on the Public Fasts of 1793 and 1794, as productions of singular worth, the Society came to the following unanimous resolution:—

Resolved,

London, April 25, 1794.

THAT the grateful thanks of this Society be paid to the Rev. J. H. WILLIAMS, Vicar of Wells-bourn, Warwickshire, for the publication of his two inestimable Sermons on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794. The doctrines and sentiments which they contain are in perfect unison with the principles of this Society; and we trust that the motives and springs of action which he recommends will ever be found to direct our conduct.

By Order of Society,

D. ADAMS, Secretary.

Society for Constitutional Information.

MAY 2, 1794.

THIS being the Anniversary of the Society, upwards of Three Hundred Persons dined together at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in the Strand.

JOHN WHARTON, M. P. in the Chair.

STEWARDS.

Thomas Thompson, M. P.

John Williams

John Chatfield

John Pearson

John Bellenden Gawler

Arthur Blake

Robert Knight

William Sharp

George Wingfield Sparrow

Thomas Wardle

Jeremiah Joyce

Charles Goring

John Bonham.

During the time of dinner, and between the toasts, a numerous band played the popular tunes of *Ca Ira*, the *Carmagnol*, the *Marseillois March*, the *Democrat*, and a new piece of music called the "FREE CONSTITUTION."

After dinner the following Sentiments were given with unbounded applause:—

1. THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

2. A Free Constitution.

3. The Swine of England, the Rabble of Scotland, and the Wretches of Ireland.

4. Equal Laws and Liberty.

5. May Despotism be trodden under the Hoofs of the Swinish Multitude.

6. THE ARMIES CONTENDING FOR LIBERTY.

7. Wisdom, Firmness and Unanimity to all the Patriotic Societies in Great Britain.

8. To the reign of Peace and Liberty.

A Citizen then rose, and in a short speech observed, that the Stewards seemed to have forgotten in their list of Toasts a person who had done more than almost any man towards *the Reign of Peace and Liberty*; he would, therefore, propose as a toast "Lord Stanhope." An amendment was proposed, that instead of Lord Stanhope, Citizen Stanhope should be drank, which was received with thundering applause.

9. May the Public Revenue never be applied to the purposes of Corruption.

10. The Victims to the cause of Liberty suffering under the sentences of the Court of Justiciary.

11. Archibald Hamilton Rowan, and the Patriots of Ireland.

12. The persecuted Patriots of England.

13. MAY THE ABETTORS OF THE PRESENT WAR
BE ITS VICTIMS.

14. The Chairman, and success to his exertions in the cause of
Freedom.

Mr. Wharton thanked the company for their marked approbation of his conduct, and pledged himself to continue his efforts in the cause of Liberty. He then said he would propose as a toast.

15. That steady Friend to Liberty, John Horne Tooke.

Mr. Tooke said he hoped it would be the last time that his health should be drank. His ambition was, that hereafter *his MEMORY should be given.*

16. MAY ALL GOVERNMENTS BE THOSE OF THE
LAWS, AND ALL LAWS THOSE OF THE PEOPLE.

17. Thomas Paine.

The Chairman then gave as a concluding Toast a Sentiment directly in opposition to that of Mr. Wyndham.

18. Prosperity to the Commerce and Manufactures of Great
Britain.

In the course of the day the following Songs were sung:

THE FREE CONSTITUTION.

COME drink to a Free Constitution;

Let the trumpets sound and the hautboys play,

Huzza, Huzza, Huzza.

To the downfall of all TYRANNY,

I long to see the day;

Confusion to him that shall set it up again,

Huzza, Huzza, Huzza, Huzza, Huzza, Huzza.

AN ODE,

*Written for the Anniversary Dinner of the Society for Constitutional
Information, by Sir WILLIAM JONES.*

I.

Verdant myrtle's branchy pride

Shall my thirsty blade entwine;

Such Harmodius deck'd thy side,

Such Aristogiton thine.

II.

They the base Hipparchus slew,

At the Feast for Pallas crown'd,

Gods! how swift their poignards flew!

How the Monster ting'd the ground.

III.

Then in Athens all was Peace,
 EQUAL LAWS AND LIBERTY;
 Nurse of Arts and Eye of Greece,
 People valiant, firm and free.

 SONG,

 BY A CITIZEN VISITOR.

I.

GIVE me the man whose dauntless soul
 Oppression's threat defies,
 And bids, though tyrant thunders roll,
 The SUN of Freedom rise;
 Who laughs at all the conjur'd storms
 State forc'ry wakes around;
 At Pow'r in all his *Protean* forms—
 At Title's empty sound.

II.

Give me the soul whose lustrous zeal,
 Diffusing heav'n-born lights,
 Instructs a people how to feel,
 And how to GAIN their rights;
 Who nobly scorning vain applause,
 Or Lucre's fraudulent plan
 Purely enlists for Freedom's cause—
 The dearest cause of man.

III.

Hail to the spirits blended here
 In Virtue's sacred ties!
 May they, like Virtue's self, keep clear
 Of Pensioners and Spies,
 May they, by Bastiles ne'er appall'd,
 See NATURE'S RIGHTS renew'd;
 Nor longer *unaveng'd* be call'd
 "The Swinish Multitude."

IV.

Hail to the men, where'er they be,
 Whose kindling minds advance
 In Reason's path,—All hail, ye FREE!
 Of Poland or of France!
 She comes! for ALL sweet Freedom comes!
 o no one region bound;
 The cause of HUMAN WEAL assumes,
 And claims the globe around.

V.

O, Goddess of our raptur'd hearts!
 Whose torch, supremely bright,
 ILLUMES YON LAND,—What *dastard* arts
 Would quench thy dreaded light!
 Lo! nurs'd by beings dead to shame,
 Rebellion hourly grows!
 But Justice strikes! and Courts exclaim,
 "How cruel are our foes!"

VI.

From vice to vice, while State-craft flies,
 May we its crimes pursue;
 Pierce to the *source* from whence they rise,
 And hold them up to view.
 This be our great, our stedfast task,
Resolv'd our strength to try;
 This glory, Heav'n! with hope we ask—
 For this we *dare to die*.

SONG, FROM MR. MERRY'S ODE.

FILL high the animating Glass
 And let th' electric fire pass
 From hand to hand, —
 What shall the energy controul;
 Exalted, pure, refin'd
 The health of human kind.

No more a venal tribe shall raise
 The song of prostituted praise,
 To Sovereigns who have seiz'd their pow'r;
 But at this gay, this lib'ral hour
 We bless what Heav'n design'd,
 The health of human kind,

We turn indignant from each cause
 Of Man's dismay, from partial laws,
 From Kings who seek in Gothic night
 To hide the blaze of moral light;
 We bless what Heav'n design'd,
 The health of human kind,

